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AUTHOR Amos, Neil G.; Benton, Gary J.
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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the findings of a study conducted to investigate negative teacher attitudes toward staff development as mandated by the Mississippi Educational Reform Act of 1982. The East Mississippi Center for Educational Development is a consortium of 16 rural school districts and the Meridian Branch of Mississippi State University. The Center assists school districts in developing and implementing quality staff development programs. Teacher attitudes toward staff development, a major concern identified by school administrators, was measured by a questionnaire developed by surveying 100 randomly selected elementary and secondary teachers. The top 11 concerns were used as questionnaire items. Another randomly selected group of 80 elementary and 80 secondary teachers responded to the items using a 5 point Likert type scale. Analysis procedures for the responses included frequency of responses and an examination of the mean item responses. Chi square analyses were conducted to determine if significant differences existed between responses of elementary and secondary teachers. Responses to all items revealed neutral to negative attitudes towards staff development and related activities. Secondary teachers were more negative in their responses than were elementary teachers. The study supports administrators' concerns relative to negative teacher attitudes toward staff development and related activities. Tables are included to show comparisons of the means, sample responses, and statistical analysis. A sample of the questionnaire is included. (ALL)

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TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED ACTIVITIES IN A RURAL EDUCATIONAL CONSORTIUM

By
Neil G. Amos
Gary J. Benton
Mississippi State University

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Mississippi State University
Mississippi State, Mississippi 39762

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BACKGROUND:

The Educational Reform Act of 1982 mandated each school district in Mississippi to develop and conduct staff development programs based on State Department of Education guidelines. Programs were to be based on data gathered from locally conducted needs assessments and developed to meet district needs. In addition, the recertification of teachers was tied into the staff development process. In essence, since 1984 the professional development of teachers in Mississippi has been the responsibility of local school districts.

THE EAST MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

The East Mississippi Center for Educational Development was organized to assist school districts in developing and implementing quality staff development programs. The "CENTER" is a consortium of sixteen rural school districts and the Meridian Branch of Mississippi State University. A private foundation provides operational funds as does each participating school district. The College of Education, primarily through the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, provides backup support for the Center. Staff development coordinators meet on a regular basis with university personnel to discuss and plan programs. Programs must meet State Department of Education guidelines and standards.

NEED:

Negative teacher attitude toward staff development was identified as a major concern by school administrators participating in the consortium. This study was conducted to investigate this concern.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study was to sample teacher attitudes toward staff development and related activities mandated by the Education Reform Act, analyze the data and present it to School Administrators.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSTRUMENT:

A questionnaire was constructed by the authors to measure teacher attitudes toward staff development and related activities mandated by the Mississippi Reform Act of 1982. Items for the questionnaire were constructed following a survey of one hundred randomly selected elementary and secondary school teachers from schools participating in the consortium. Subjects in this initial survey were asked to respond in writing to the question "As a school teacher, what concerns do you have about current staff development and related practices mandated by the Mississippi Reform Act of 1982"? Data reported from this survey was reviewed, catagorized and rank ordered. The top eleven concerns were converted to statements which were chosen for the survey. Ten staff development coordinators reviewed the survey to determine item validity.

METHODOLOGY:

Eighty elementary and eighty secondary teachers who were not included in the initial survey were randomly selected and asked to respond to the randomly ordered items on the five point Likert type scale. Questionnaires were distributed by staff development coordinators with instructions for the teachers to return them to the authors by mail.

ANALYSIS PROCEDURES:

The authors were concerned with providing a comprehensive description of responses to the survey. Analyses included an examination of frequency of responses across the five categories for each item and an examination of the mean item responses for each group. Chi-square (X^2) analyses were conducted on an item by item basis to determine if significant differences existed between responses of elementary and secondary teachers. (Table II)

FINDINGS:

Responses to all questions revealed a neutral to high dissatisfaction with staff development and related activities. (Table 1) Secondary teachers were more negative in their responses than were elementary teachers.

When asked about relevancy to their professional needs, elementary teachers indicated that staff development activities were not relevant to their professional needs. Similar responses occured when asked whether staff development activities helped them to become better teachers and whether they were able to implement knowledge and skills gained from staff development activities in their classrooms.

Both groups indicated that enthusiasm for teaching had not improved since the implementation of the Educational Reform Act. They also felt they had little direct input into planning staff development activities.

Secondary teachers agreed that there was too much paperwork associated with staff development, whereas elementary teachers disagreed.

Both groups responded "don't know" when asked if their understanding of the Educational Reform Act and performance based accreditation had improved.

When asked whether students were learning more as a result of staff development, elementary teachers were not sure. Secondary teachers indicated that learning had not increased.

CONCLUSION:

In summary, the study supported administrators' concerns relative to negative teacher attitudes toward staff development and related activities. The study revealed only five slightly positive attitudes expressed by elementary teachers and no positive attitudes by secondary teachers. Elementary teacher responses ranged from neutral to mildly negative. Secondary teacher responses ranged from neutral to highly negative. Significant differences occured on all but three items.

TABLE 1 COMPARISON OF THE MEANS

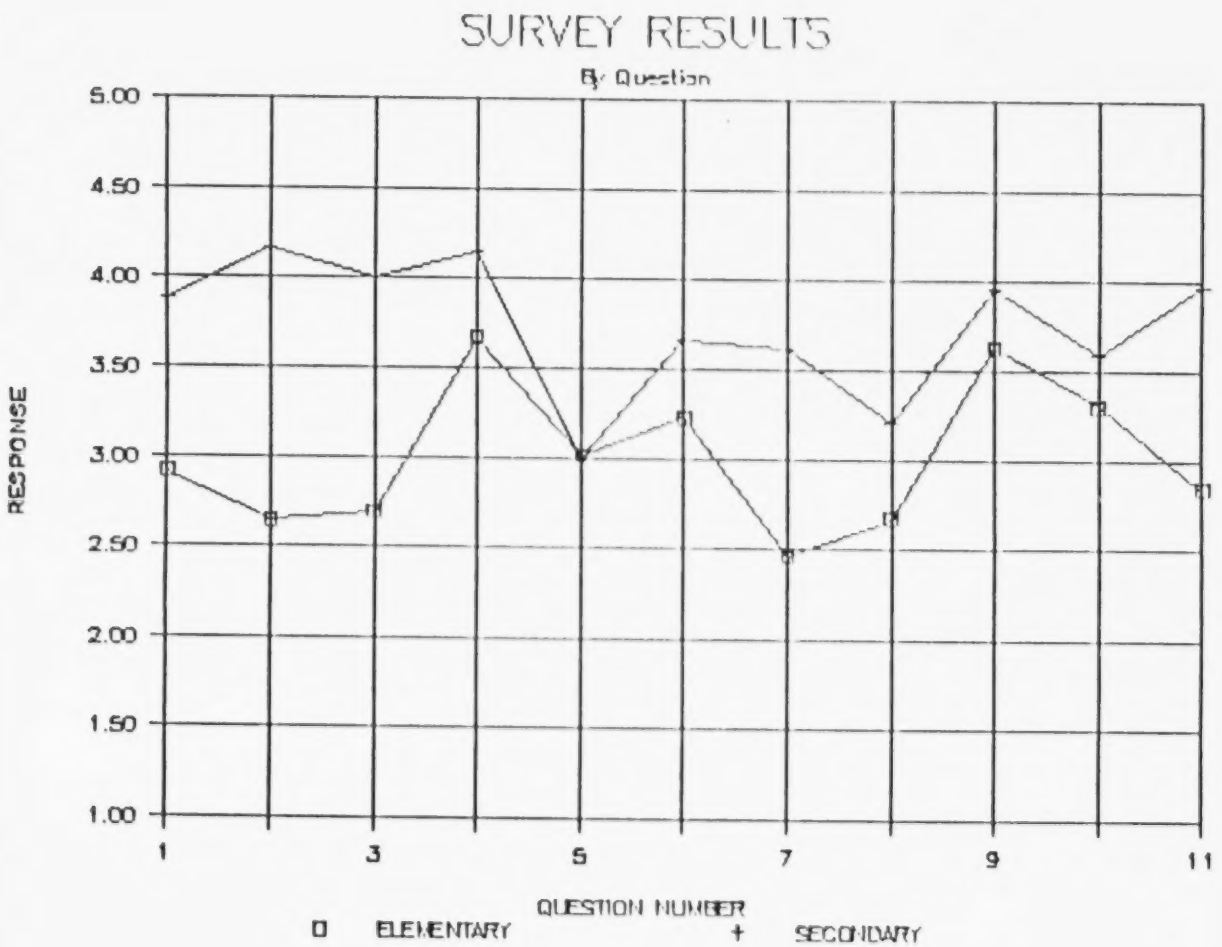

TABLE 2 SAMPLE RESPONSES AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

QU#	DIV	1 SAG	2 AGR	3 NEU	4 DIS	5 SDIS	MEAN	S/D	95% C/I		95% SIG
1	ELEM	7	21	32	12	8	2.91	1.35	2.62	3.21	
1	SECN	5	5	8	38	24	3.89	1.23	3.62	4.16	YES
2	ELEM	7	28	36	5	4	2.64	1.23	2.37	2.91	
2	SECN	2	5	10	22	39	4.17	1.31	3.88	4.46	YES
3	ELEM	6	34	26	7	7	2.69	1.44	2.37	3.00	
3	SECN	2	7	11	29	31	4.00	1.38	3.70	4.30	YES
4	ELEM	5	8	16	31	20	3.66	1.29	3.38	3.95	
4	SECN	1	4	12	32	35	4.14	1.23	3.88	4.41	YES
5	ELEM	8	21	23	18	10	3.01	1.44	2.70	3.33	
5	SECN	9	18	25	20	8	3.00	1.34	2.71	3.29	NO
6	ELEM	11	12	18	26	13	3.23	1.31	2.94	3.51	
6	SECN	4	8	15	37	16	3.66	1.27	3.38	3.94	YES
7	ELEM	17	28	20	12	3	2.45	1.21	2.18	2.72	
7	SECN	2	5	28	32	13	3.61	1.06	3.38	3.85	YES
8	ELEM	9	19	43	8	1	2.66	1.02	2.44	2.89	
8	SECN	4	13	34	21	8	3.20	1.24	2.93	3.47	YES
9	ELEM	4	10	13	38	15	3.63	1.35	3.33	3.92	
9	SECN	5	5	9	32	30	3.95	1.25	3.68	4.22	NO
10	ELEM	8	14	18	26	14	3.30	1.39	2.99	3.61	
10	SECN	2	7	30	24	17	3.59	1.18	3.33	3.85	NO
11	ELEM	8	21	34	10	7	2.84	1.29	2.55	3.12	
11	SECN	2	3	9	50	18	3.96	1.13	3.72	4.21	YES
N=80	ELEM	126	293	461	480	323	3.35	1.40	3.28	3.41	
N=80	SECN	121	275	438	518	333	3.40	1.39	3.33	3.46	NO

NOTE: QUESTIONS 6, 7, & 10 WERE NEGATIVELY SCORED; SUCH AS "STRONGLY AGREE" WAS SCORED AS "STRONGLY DISAGREE" ETC.

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East Mississippi Center For Educational Development

STAFF DEVELOPMENT SURVEY (Teachers)

INTRODUCTION:

The East Mississippi Center for Educational Development is a consortium of sixteen school districts committed to the promotion of quality staff development programs in East Central Mississippi. Your school district is a member. This questionnaire has been developed to assist us in working with the State Department of Education and with staff development coordinators to improve staff development in our region. Please take a few minutes and complete the form. Your name and the name of your school district will not be required.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Gary Benton, Coordinator

.....

Number of years teaching_____ Elementary, Secondary, Other (specify)_____

.....

Please respond using the following scale --- 1. STRONGLY AGREE
2. AGREE
3. DON'T KNOW OR NOT APPLICABLE
4. DISAGREE
5. STRONGLY DISAGREE

_____1. Staff development activities are relevant to my professional needs.

_____2. Staff development activities have helped me become a better teacher.

_____3. Teachers are able to implement in their classrooms, knowledge and skills gained through staff development activities.

_____4. My enthusiasm for teaching has improved since the implementation of the Educational Reform Act.

_____5. Staff development activities have increased my understanding of the Educational Reform Act and performance based accreditation.

_____6. Too many hours are spent on staff development.

_____7. There is too much paperwork associated with staff development activities.

_____8. School administrators are enthusiastic over staff development.

_____9. I have direct input into planning staff development activities that are appropriate for what I teach.

_____10. Another approach to teacher re-certification should be considered.

_____11. Students are learning more because of staff development.

Please use the back of this page to make comments relating to improving staff development.